

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

AUGUST 24, 2007

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>> THE FOLLOWING IS A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>> COMING UP NEXT, IS LAS VEGAS-STYLE GAMBLING THE SOLUTION TO THE STATE'S BUDGET WOES?

THE DEADLINE FOR THE END OF FLORIDA NO-FAULT IS LOOMING.

OBAMA WANTS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR CUBAN AMERICANS TO VISIT THEIR FAMILIES IN CUBA.

AND CHARLIE CRIST REWARDS SOME OF HIS CAMPAIGN DONORS WITH SEATS ON THE WILDLIFE COMMISSION.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

>> FROM THE WEDU STUDIOS, THIS IS "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

AND NOW, MODERATOR ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

THIS WEEK, OUR PANELISTS ARE STEVE BOSQUET IS TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES."

JEREMY WALLACE IS A POLITICAL REPORTER WITH THE "SARASOTA HERALD TRIBUNE."

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

DARRYL ROUSON IS AN ATTORNEY AND A REPUBLICAN.

AND MIKE SUAREZ IS CHAIRMAN OF THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

GOOD TO SEE EVERYBODY.

WELL, FLORIDA GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST IS EAGER TO STRIKE A
DEAL ON LAS VEGAS-STYLE GAMBLING THAT WILL BRING MUCH-NEEDED
REVENUE TO THE STATE.

NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDERWAY BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE SEMINOLE
TRIBE.

THE STATE WANTS A SHARE OF THE MONEY FROM THE TRIBE'S
PLANNED EXPANSION TO INCLUDE GAMES LIKE BLACKJACK AND
ROULETTE.

THE FEDERAL INTERIOR DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE TO APPROVE ANY
AGREEMENT.

CRIST FAVORS TIEING POSSIBLE GAMBLING REVENUES SPECIFICALLY
TO EDUCATION OR PUBLIC SAFETY RATHER THAN TO THE STATE'S
GENERAL BUDGET.

WELL, STEVE, HOW LIKELY IS THIS?

>> PRETTY LIKELY.

>> IS IT?

>> I THINK SO.

THE PROBLEM NOW IS, THOUGH, THAT THE LAW IS VAGUE AS TO
WHETHER THE LEGISLATURE NEEDS TO SIGN OFF ON THE AGREEMENT.

CHARLIE CRIST SAID THIS WEEK HE THINKS THE LEGISLATURE
SHOULD SIGN OFF ON IT.

AND YOU HAVE AN ARDENT OPPONENT OF GAMBLING IN MARCO RUBIO,
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE.

WE CARRIED THE STORY SUGGESTING QUOTING SENATOR MIKE FASANO
WHO SUPPORTS THIS GAMBLING ADDITION.

HE THINKS THE CHANCES ARE SLIM TO NONE THAT IT WOULD GET
THROUGH THE HOUSE.

SO IT DEPENDS HOW STRONGLY AND HOW MUCH RUBIO IS WILLING TO
PUT HIS FOOT DOWN.

DO THE MATH, I MEAN, I THINK CRIST WOULD PROBABLY HAVE THE
VOTES BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH REPUBLICANS OUTNUMBER DEMOCRATS,
YOU KNOW, STRONGLY IN THE HOUSE, MOST OF THE DEMOCRATS WOULD
SUPPORT THIS.

I THINK A LOT OF THE REPUBLICANS IN SOUTH FLORIDA OTHER THAN
RUBIO WOULD PROBABLY BE INCLINED TO SUPPORT IT.

SO I THINK HE WOULD GET TO THE 61 VOTES.

THE QUESTION IS, IS RUBIO GOING TO STAND IN HIS WAY?

>> I WANT TO BRING THAT UP LATER.

JUST GIVE US AN IDEA, WHERE WOULD THIS GAMBLING HAPPEN?

AT THE SEMINOLE INDIAN GAMING PLACES THAT EXIST RIGHT NOW?

>> RIGHT.

SEVEN.

THERE ARE SEVEN EXISTING.

AND IT'S JUST THE SEMINOLE TRIBE.

THE MICCOSUKEE TRIBE, A DIFFERENT TRIBE, WOULD HAVE TO
NEGOTIATE THEIR OWN DEAL.

THE INDIAN GAMING REGULATORY ACT PASSED BY CONGRESS, 1987,
SAYS THAT SOVEREIGN INDIAN TRIBES ARE ENTITLED TO THE SAME
LEVEL OF GAMING THAT IS SANCTIONED BY THE STATE ANYWHERE
ELSE.

WELL, YOU HAVE CASINO GAMBLING AT FOUR PARI-MUTUEL SITES IN
BROWARD COUNTY APPROVED BY THE SEMINOLES.

THE SEMINOLES, YOU COULD ARGUE, HAVE BEEN VERY PATIENT IN
WAITING FOR THEIR PIECE OF THE ACTION.

NOW CRIST IS NEGOTIATING WITH THEM.

THERE WOULD BE SEVEN SITES IN THE STATE INCLUDING THE
SEMINOLE HARD ROCK THAT WOULD HAVE SLOT MACHINES AND MORE,
ROULETTE, BACCARAT, ALL KINDS OF STUFF.

>> SOME PEOPLE ARE ATTACKING THE GOVERNOR SAYING THIS IS
CONTRADICTING WHAT HE RAN ON DURING HIS CANDIDACY.

THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, HE'S ACTING RESPONSIBLY.

HE'S COME INTO A SITUATION WHERE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS
SAID TO HIM, YOU MUST DO THIS.

IT WOULD NOT BE RESPONSIBLE, I DON'T THINK, FOR HIM TO LET
THIS GO BY IF THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CITIZENRY TO
BENEFIT, WHETHER IT'S SPENT ON EDUCATION OR ON PUBLIC SAFETY
OR BOTH.

>> WELL, LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT BENEFIT.

THE STATE HAS A \$1.5 BILLION DEFICIT.

IS THERE ENOUGH MONEY IN CASINO GAMBLING TO MAKE UP THAT
DEFICIT?

>> I DON'T THINK ANYONE PROPOSES THAT THERE IS ENOUGH MONEY TO DO THAT.

HOWEVER, IT WILL ASSIST WHEN THEY COME TO THESE DRASTIC DECISIONS THEY'LL HAVE TO MAKE ABOUT BUDGET CUTS IF THERE'S AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF REVENUE.

>> DARRYL IS RIGHT.

HE'S GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO NEGOTIATE HERE.

YOU KNOW, JEB BUSH WAS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO ANY MORE GAMBLING, AND HIS BROTHER'S ADMINISTRATION DIDN'T PUSH JEB BUSH TO CUT A DEAL THE WAY THE INTERIOR DEPARTMENT IS PUSHING CHARLIE CRIST.

THAT IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

HOWEVER, HERE IS THE ISSUE, THE POLITICAL ISSUE IS THAT HERE AGAIN, YOUR MOST STRIDENT OPPONENTS OF MORE GAMBLING IN THE STATE ARE PROBABLY THE CONSERVATIVE WING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY WHERE CHARLIE CRIST HAS ALREADY KIND OF STRAYED AWAY FROM ON ISSUES LIKE GLOBAL WARMING AND RESTORATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND SO FORTH.

SO THERE IS THE SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION THAT FEELS THAT THE STATE IS GOING ON A SLIPPERY CASINO GAMBLING SLOPE HERE. LITTLE BY LITTLE, YOU'LL HAVE CASINO GAMBLING EVERYWHERE AFTER A FEW YEARS.

>> YOU ALREADY HAVE CHRISTIAN COALITION TYPE REPUBLICANS WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIRECTION CRIST IS GOING.

THIS COULD BE THE STRAW THAT BREAKS THEIR BACK AT THIS

POINT.

THEY'VE SEEN HIM GO SO MANY MODERATE POSITIONS, WHAT WOULD THEIR RESPONSE BE?

THEY CAN'T STOP IT, LIKE YOU SAID.

THEY DON'T HAVE THE VOTES, PROBABLY, TO BLOCK IT COMPLETELY, BUT JUST TO HAVE THAT ANIMOSITY FLOATING AROUND IN THOSE CHAMBERS ON FUTURE LEGISLATION COULD BE SOMETHING THAT COULD BE PROBLEMATIC.

YOU ONLY NEED ONE PERSON TO REALLY MUCK THINGS UP ON A COMMITTEE TO CAUSE SOME TROUBLE THERE.

>> YOU KNOW, IT'S FUNNY.

GAMBLING HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING IN FLORIDA, YOU KNOW, FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.

AND REUBIN ASKEW AND BOB GRAHAM, WHEN THEY WERE GOVERNOR, BOTH OF THEM WERE AGAINST CASINO-STYLE GAMBLING.

WHAT WE ARE SEEING NOW IS INCREMENTALISM IN TERMS OF THE GAMBLING LOBBY.

THEY'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET INTO CERTAIN AREAS AND ESSENTIALLY OPEN UP THE FLOODGATES.

THIS IS, ESSENTIALLY, THE FLOODGATES.

THIS WILL, ESSENTIALLY, CAUSE A LOT OF PEOPLE TO RETHINK WHETHER OR NOT CASINO GAMBLING SHOULD BE HERE IN FLORIDA.

YOU KNOW, WITH THE FLORIDA LOTTERY, WE'VE HAD GAMBLING HERE FOR A LONG TIME.

IT'S NOT ANYTHING NEW, BUT I'M SURE THAT PEOPLE LIKE REUBIN

ASKEW AND GRAHAM ARE SITTING THERE THINKING TO THEMSELVES,
YOU KNOW, WE FOUGHT LONG AND HARD TO MAKE SURE CASINO
GAMBLING WAS NOT HERE IN THE STATE AND NOW IT WILL GO BY THE
WAYSIDE.

>> IT'S A HOT-BUTTON ISSUE.

THERE'S NO QUESTION ABOUT IT.

BUT TO ATTACK THE GOVERNOR FOR ABANDONING A CONSERVATIVE
WING OF HIS PARTY BECAUSE HE'S FORCED TO DO SOMETHING THAT
WAS NOT FORCED UPON HIS PREDECESSOR AND DO SO RESPONSIBLY, I
THINK IS A LITTLE UNFAIR.

>> YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR THOSE CHRISTIAN COALITION PEOPLE
TELL YOU, THE COSTS THAT WILL INCUR BECAUSE OF EXPANDED
GAMBLING WILL QUICKLY MAKE UP THAT GAP.

I THINK YOU'LL HEAR THOSE PEOPLE COME OUT PRETTY ARDENTLY
FOR THIS.

THEY HAVE THE MONEY.

THEY HAVE THE POLITICAL RESOURCES TO FIGHT THIS THING.

>> STEVE, I'M REALLY CURIOUS ABOUT THIS RIFT BETWEEN HOUSE
SPEAKER MARCO RUBIO AND GOVERNOR CRIST.

HOW DEEP IS THAT RIFT?

WE SEE GLIMMERS OF IT HERE OVER THE ISSUE OF GAMBLING.

HOW BAD IS IT?

>> YOU DESCRIBE IT AS A RIFT.

I THINK IF RUBIO WERE SITTING ON THIS PANEL, HE WOULD SAY WE
JUST HAVE A COUPLE OF PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THEY EACH SAY NICE THINGS ABOUT HOW THE OTHER ONE IS DOING
AND STUFF.

ON TWO THINGS.

FIRST OF ALL, CRIST HAD NO INTEREST IN THE TAX SWAP PROPOSAL
THAT RUBIO HAD.

RAISE THE SALES TAX, LOWER PROPERTY TAXES.

NOT A GOOD IDEA, CHARLIE CRIST SAID.

I DON'T THINK RUBIO LIKED THAT A WHOLE LOT.

AND MARCO RUBIO, INTERESTING, BORN IN LAS VEGAS.

FATHER WORKED AT A CASINO OR A CASINO-RELATED FACILITY, BUT
HE'S STRONGLY AGAINST MORE GAMBLING.

IT WAS MARCO RUBIO AND JEB BUSH WHO WENT TO MIAMI A COUPLE
OF YEARS AGO AND PREVENTED MIAMI-DADE FROM DOING WHAT
BROWARD DID.

BROWARD VOTERS SAID WE WANT SLOTS IN OUR PARI-MUTUELS,
MIAMI-DADE SAID NO.

MARCO RUBIO GETS PART OF THE CREDIT FOR DOING THAT.

IT'S A ONE-UPSMANSHIP OF WHO WILL BE -- YOU KNOW, MARCO
RUBIO SEES HIMSELF AS THE HEIR TO THE JEB BUSH MANTLE,
IDEOLOGICALLY, IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

>> DOES HE THINK THAT CRIST IS BETRAYING THAT LEGACY?

>> I THINK HE DOES.

HE HASN'T SAID THAT PUBLICLY SO FIRMLY.

BUT THAT'S CLEAR.

>> MIKE?

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> WELL, THE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO DEPENDS ON HOW LARGE RUBIO'S AMBITIONS ARE.

YOU KNOW, OBVIOUSLY, HE'S LOOKING AT SOMETHING TO MAKE HIMSELF MORE ATTRACTIVE AS A STATEWIDE CANDIDATE.

YOU KNOW, I'M NOT SURE IF THAT IS WHERE HE'S GOING.

HE'S VERY YOUNG.

HE'S AN ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATE.

HE COMES FROM A PLACE THAT HAS LOTS OF DONORS FOR REPUBLICANS.

BUT HE ALSO HAS TO WIN IN NORTH FLORIDA AND CENTRAL FLORIDA VOTERS.

SO THIS IS A WAY FOR HIM TO GO AFTER CONSERVATIVES AND REALLY SHOW HIM, I'VE GOT THE BONA FIDES TO BE A CONSERVATIVE ALTHOUGH I'M FROM MIAMI-DADE.

>> IF PEOPLE PUT UP A FIGHT AGAINST GAMBLING, HE THEORETICALLY HAS THE SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES ON HIS SIDE IF HE RUNS FOR OFFICE.

>> HE'S TRYING TO WORK HIS CONSERVATIVE BONA FIDES, EVERYONE IN NORTH FLORIDA THINKS EVERYBODY IN SOUTH FLORIDA IS LOOSE WITH MONEY, LOOSE WITH WOMEN, EVERYTHING ELSE.

THAT'S WHAT HE NEEDS TO TRY AND DO.

>> FLORIDA HOUSE LEGISLATORS THIS WEEK INCHED CLOSER TO TAKING UP A NEW NO-FAULT CAR INSURANCE BILL IN THEIR SPECIAL SESSION NEXT MONTH.

CURRENTLY, PERSONAL INJURY PROTECTION, OR PIP CAR INSURANCE

LAW IS SET TO EXPIRE OCTOBER 1st.

THE NEW HOUSE PROPOSAL SEEKS TO PRESERVE THE MANDATORY \$10,000 COVERAGE IN PIP, BUT WITH NEW LIMITS ON NONEMERGENCY CARE, COPAYMENTS AND ATTORNEY FEES.

OVER AT THE SENATE, MINORITY LEADER STEVE GELLER SAID THE NO-FAULT MATTER SHOULD WAIT UNTIL THE REGULAR SESSION.

>> THERE IS STILL THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PERSONAL INJURY PROTECTION TO BE PROVIDED FOR.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'M TERRIBLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THAT NOTION, TO BE CANDID WITH YOU, BUT, YOU KNOW, IT STILL COULD HAPPEN. YOU HAVE TO HAVE A COMMITMENT BY BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE TO WANT TO ACT ON THIS ISSUE.

AND I THINK THEY BOTH WANT TO ACT.

I'M JUST NOT SURE THAT THEY HAVE COME TO AN ACCORD ON HOW TO ACT.

>> MIKE, WHEN YOU'RE NOT A PANELIST ON THIS SHOW, YOU'RE IN THE INSURANCE BUSINESS.

LET ME ASK YOU, WHAT IS AT STAKE IF ON OCTOBER 1st, PIP AND NO-FAULT GOES AWAY HERE IN FLORIDA?

>> REALLY DON'T KNOW.

I MEAN, RIGHT NOW, INSURANCE COMPANIES ARE SCRAMBLING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE NEXT STEPS ARE GOING TO BE.

YOU KNOW, RIGHT NOW, IF YOU'RE IN AN ACCIDENT, YOUR OWN INSURANCE PAYS FOR YOUR INJURIES UP TO 80% FOR YOUR INJURIES, 60% FOR LOST BENEFITS.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THE PROBLEM THAT WE HAVE IS, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN
AFTERWARDS?

REALLY, THIS IS MORE OF A PROBLEM OF FRAUD AS OPPOSED TO
PIP -- THE PIP LAW BEING BROKEN IN ANY WAY.

THERE ARE LOTS OF PEOPLE THAT WILL BE HURT BY THIS.

YOU KNOW, OBVIOUSLY, PEOPLE, TRIAL LAWYERS AND CERTAIN
PEOPLE IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, BUT I THINK IT'S GOING TO
HURT FLORIDIANS EVEN MORE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT GOING TO KNOW
WHERE THEY ARE GOING TO HAVE TO GO TO GET PAID FOR AN
INJURY.

>> THEY ARE NOT GOING TO KNOW, BECAUSE IT ISN'T AUTOMATIC
THAT THEY ARE CARRYING PERSONAL INJURY PROTECTION.

>> EXACTLY.

SO AS AN EXAMPLE, IF YOU'RE IN AN ACCIDENT, YOUR PIP TAKES
CARE OF YOUR INJURIES FIRST AND THEN EVERYTHING ELSE COMES
AFTER.

IF IT CHANGES OVER OCTOBER 1st, WE'RE NOT SURE IF MY
HEALTH INSURANCE WILL PICK UP FOR ME ONLY.

WILL I HAVE TO PAY FOR LIABILITY FOR THE OTHER PERSON?
THAT HAS NOT BEEN SET UP YET.

THEY ARE NOT EVEN TELLING INSURANCE AGENTS YET WHERE IT'S
GOING TO GO.

THEY ARE EXPECTING SOME CHANGES TO BE DONE IN THE SEPTEMBER
SPECIAL SESSION.

>> DARRYL IN.

>> I THINK PIP MAKES SENSE TO KEEP IT.

IT AFFORDS PROTECTIONS FOR BOTH THE INJURED PERSON AND THE ONE WHO HITS SOMEBODY.

BUT YOU HIT IT ON THE HEAD, MR. SUAREZ, WHEN YOU TALKED ABOUT THE ISSUE BEING FRAUD.

I DON'T THINK IT'S ABOUT ATTACKING THE LAWYERS, PERCENTAGE OF WHAT THEY GET.

IT'S NOT ABOUT ATTACKING, NECESSARILY, WHAT THE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOMS ARE CHARGING TO RECOUP SERVICES THAT THEY PROVIDE FOR INDIGENT CARE AND CRITICAL CARE, BUT IT'S ABOUT HOW DO WE PROTECT OURSELVES FROM FRAUD THAT CAUSES THE COST OF INSURANCE TO RISE?

>> AND HOW DO YOU PROTECT THE STATE FROM FRAUD?

I MEAN, DO YOU SUNSET THE PIP LAW AND JUST LET IT GO AWAY AND GO BACK TO THE OLD SYSTEM?

IS THAT THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT AGAINST FRAUD?

>> I TALKED TO A COUPLE OF LEGISLATORS THIS WEEK ABOUT THAT, AND THEY WERE AFRAID IN ORDER TO GET RID OF THE ONE OR TWO PERCENT FRAUD THAT'S IN THE SYSTEM, WHAT THE LEGISLATURE WAS GOING TO END UP DOING WAS WIPING OUT A PROGRAM THAT BY AND LARGE HAS BEEN A GOOD SAFETY NET, PARTICULARLY FOR THE HOSPITALS TO MAKE SURE THEY GET PAYMENT.

I THINK YOU HAVE CONCERN ABOUT SOME LEGISLATORS ABOUT, WELL, HOW CAN WE LET THIS WHOLE THING GO FOR ONE PERCENT FRAUD?

>> STEVE, HOW LIKELY IS THIS ISSUE GOING TO COME UP IN THE

SEPTEMBER SPECIAL SESSION?

>> WELL, I DON'T SEE IT AT THIS POINT.

CHARLIE CRIST WILL NOT USE A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF CAPITAL.

I MEAN, HE COULD UNILATERALLY FORCE THEM TO TAKE IT UP.

HE HASN'T DONE SO.

THERE'S NO CONSENSUS.

HERE AGAIN, THE ISSUE AGAIN IS MARCO RUBIO.

RUBIO IS AN OPPONENT OF PIP, NO-FAULT.

HE WANTS IT TO GO AWAY.

YOU HAVE TWO THINGS AT WORK HERE.

THE PUBLIC OUTCRY BY THE CITIZENRY ISN'T LOUD ENOUGH.

THE LEGISLATURE, I'M AFRAID, HAS GOTTEN CONDITIONED TO THE LEVEL OF NOISE WE HEARD IN PROPERTY INSURANCE AND PROPERTY TAXES.

SO ANYTHING BELOW THAT CAN'T BE THAT BIG A DEAL.

THAT'S WRONG.

NUMBER TWO, YOU DON'T HAVE A CONSENSUS.

AND THERE'S THIS MINDSET IN TALLAHASSEE, IF WE DON'T HAVE A DEAL CUT BEFORE WE GO IN, WE COULD HAVE A DISASTROUS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE, SO THEY WOULD RATHER NOT TOUCH IT.

>> LISA CARLTON ABOUT THAT, THEY DON'T WANT TO GET CAUGHT UP WASTING A LOT OF ENERGY ON OTHER ISSUES THAT WON'T GET SOLVED WHEN THEY HAVE THE LOOMING BUDGET PROBLEM THAT REALLY SHOULD BE THE NUMBER ONE THING ON THE TABLE.

SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T THINK ANY OF THE OTHER LITTLE THINGS OR

BIG THINGS WILL GET TAKEN CARE OF.

YOU WONDER, THE KID CARE PROGRAM WAS NEVER FINISHED OFF.

THE INSURANCE ISSUE, CLEARLY PEOPLE AREN'T GETTING THE BENEFITS THEY THOUGHT.

YOU THOUGHT SOME OF THOSE WOULD GET PICKED UP, NO, NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

THEY DON'T HAVE DEALS WORKED OUT ON THOSE THINGS.

THEY ARE JUST GOING TO MOVE ON.

>> MIKE, LET ME GO BACK TO YOU FOR A MOMENT.

IF THIS DOES SUNSET, AS IT LOOKS LIKE IT MAY RIGHT NOW ON OCTOBER 1st, DOES THAT MEAN THAT HOSPITALS END UP PAYING MORE MONEY BECAUSE THEY ARE HOLDING THE BAG?

SO MANY PEOPLE IN FLORIDA DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE.

THERE ARE A LOT OF UNINSURED MOTORISTS.

SO A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO GO INTO THE EMERGENCY ROOM AND HAVE NOTHING TO PAY WITH.

AND TWO, ARE WE GOING TO SEE MORE LAWSUITS AS A RESULT OF THE END OF PIP?

>> I THINK ON YOUR SECOND POINT THAT WE WILL SEE MORE LAWSUITS.

I THINK THAT BECAUSE THERE'S NO FIRST PLACE TO HAVE YOUR INJURIES PAID FOR, THE FIRST PLACE YOU'RE GOING TO GO TO IS THE OTHER PERSON.

AND THAT'S GOING TO CAUSE MORE LAWSUITS.

SECONDLY, I THINK ON YOUR POINT ABOUT HEALTH INSURANCE AND

ON EMERGENCY ROOM CARE, IT WILL CAUSE A MUCH BIGGER SHARE OF OUR DOLLARS GOING TO EMERGENCY CARE THAN WE CURRENTLY HAVE. WITH EMERGENCY CARE, IF YOU'RE IN AN ACCIDENT, IT WILL PAY FOR THAT.

SO I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY DON'T THINK THIS IS A BIG ISSUE. I GUARANTEE YOU THAT IF THEY DO NOT DO ANYTHING THIS SPECIAL SESSION, WHEN IT COMES TO JANUARY, THEY'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT UP THEN.

>> AND TO LET PIP GO AWAY CREATES MORE PROBLEMS THAN WHAT WE HAVE TODAY.

>> ALL RIGHT, DARRYL.

THANKS.

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BARACK OBAMA WROTE A MIAMI HERALD GUEST EDITORIAL TUESDAY PROMOTING RELAXED POLICY TOWARD CUBA.

OBAMA WANTS TO REVERSE CURRENT U.S. RESTRICTIONS AND GRANT UNLIMITED RIGHTS TO RELATIVES OF CUBANS WHO WANT TO VISIT THE MONEY OR SEND -- VISIT THE ISLAND OR SEND MONEY BACK HOME.

HE STATES, CUBAN-AMERICAN CONNECTIONS TO FAMILY IN CUBA ARE NOT ONLY A BASIC RIGHT IN HUMANITARIAN TERMS BUT ALSO OUR BEST TOOL FOR HELPING TO FOSTER THE BEGINNINGS OF GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY ON THE ISLAND.

OBAMA WILL SPEAK AT A MIAMI-DADE DEMOCRATIC PARTY FUND-RAISER THIS WEEKEND IN LITTLE HAVANA.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

JEREMY, DOES THIS HELP OR HURT BARACK OBAMA IN TERMS OF
PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS?

ARE THERE A LOT OF VOTES TO BE HAD BY TAKING THIS POSITION?

>> WELL, IN THE GENERAL ELECTION, HE CERTAINLY DIVIDES UP
THE VOTE PRETTY GOOD IN FLORIDA.

THERE'S CLEARLY A LOT OF DISAGREEMENT ON THIS ISSUE.

IT'S ONE OF THE ISSUES WHERE YOU SEE A LOT OF DEMOCRATS STAY
AWAY FROM THIS TOPIC.

YOU KNOW, HERE HE IS.

HE'S COMING IN HERE.

YOU WONDER HOW LONG IT WILL BE FOR OTHERS TO SAY, SEE, HERE
IS HIS INEXPERIENCE AGAIN.

HE KEEPS TRYING TO MAKE DEALS AND WORK WITH COUNTRIES THAT,
YOU KNOW, WE'VE MADE PREVIOUS FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENTS ON,
AND HE'S TRYING TO GO THE OTHER WAY.

YOU KNOW HE'S OPENING HIMSELF UP TO A LOT OF CRITICISM THAT,
YOU KNOW, THE CLINTONS, CLEARLY, THEY SUPPORTED THESE
RESTRICTIONS IN CUBA.

THEY DID NOT RELAX THESE WHEN THEY WERE IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

SO YOU KNOW HILLARY IS GOING TO BE COMING OUT AND USING THIS
AS AN EXAMPLE AGAIN OF HIM MAYBE NOT BEING EXPERIENCED
ENOUGH IN FOREIGN POLICY TO HANDLE THE JOB AT HAND.

>> STEVE, ONE OF THE MOST FEARED GROUPS HISTORICALLY, AT
LEAST THE LAST 40 YEARS IN FLORIDA POLITICS HAS BEEN THE
CUBAN AMERICAN EXILE REPORT.

>> RIGHT.

I THINK OBAMA IS ON TO SOMETHING HERE THAT PROBABLY NEEDS TO BE SAID. THE CUBAN AMERICAN VOTE IS NOT MONOLITHIC, FIRST OF ALL.

SECONDLY, THE MOST ARDENT ANTI-CASTRO CUBAN AMERICANS THAT I'VE COVERED IN SOUTH FLORIDA ARE I DIDN'T REMEMBER OLDER, YOU KNOW, THE EXILES WHO CAME OVER HERE IN THE '60s. THEY ARE CHILDREN, AND PROBABLY IN SOME CASES BY NOW GRANDCHILDREN, PROBABLY IN HIGH SCHOOL BY NOW HAVE, I THINK, A MORE TOLERANT VIEW OF THIS ISSUE.

THEN YOU HAVE IN THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY IN SOUTH FLORIDA, YOU HAVE MANY NICARAGUANS, COLOMBIANS, SO FORTH.

SO IT'S NOT AS MONOLITHIC AS IT ONCE WAS.

>> DARRYL, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT OBAMA'S CLAIM THAT THIS IS A HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM, TO LET FAMILIES TRAVEL FREELY BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CUBA?

>> WELL, IT CERTAINLY IS A HUMANITARIAN OUTLOOK AND PERSPECTIVE.

BUT, CERTAINLY, I THINK WHAT MORE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE ARE SAYING IS THAT WE DON'T MIND RELAXING RESTRICTIONS, BUT WE DON'T DO THAT FIRST.

WE ALLOW DEMOCRACY TO HAPPEN, AND THEN WE REWARD DEMOCRACY WITH RELAXED RESTRICTIONS.

BUT TO THROW THAT OUT THERE NOW, I THINK IS A LITTLE IRRESPONSIBLE.

>> MIKE, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, IN TERMS OF THE HUMANITARIAN AID, PRIOR TO PRESIDENT BUSH COMING IN, THERE WAS ALWAYS TRAVEL THAT YOU COULD GO AS A FAMILY MEMBER.

I THINK THAT CANDIDATE OBAMA IS LOOKING AT THAT, AND I THINK STEVE IS RIGHT, THERE IS A GENERATIONAL CHANGE HERE, THAT THERE ARE YOUNGER CUBANS THAT LOOK AT IT AND SAY, WE SHOULD RELAX CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS.

AND I THINK THAT THEY PROBABLY WILL, WHOEVER THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, EITHER THE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT.

BUT WHENEVER YOU DEAL WITH A BRUTAL DICTATORSHIP LIKE FIDEL CASTRO'S, YOU HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL THAT YOU'RE NOT FEEDING THE BEAST.

AND THAT'S THE BIGGEST PROBLEM THAT HE HAS RIGHT NOW.

>> AND THAT'S WHAT IS SO SURPRISING.

HE OPENS HIMSELF UP TO THAT CRITICISM AT A TIME WHEN HE'S STILL TRYING TO, YOU KNOW, RECOVER FROM HIS OTHER FOREIGN POLICY VENTURES AND WANTED TO TALK TO IRAN AND SYRIA, AND, YOU KNOW.

FOR HIM TO BRING THIS UP NOW SEEMS TO BE AN ODD TIME TO OPEN HIMSELF UP TO THAT KIND OF CRITICISM.

>> OKAY.

IS IT A NET PLUS OR NET MINUS FOR HIM TO ADVOCATE FOR FREE TRAVEL BETWEEN HERE AND CUBA?

>> I THINK IT'S A MINOR PLUS.

>> DARRYL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> MINOR PLUS, BUT IT SHOWS HIS COURAGEOUSNESS AND WILLINGNESS TO STEP OUT, TO BE A STRONG LEADER MEANS THAT YOU SOMETIMES TAKE UNPOPULAR CONTROVERSIAL STANDS. BUT OVERALL, I DON'T THINK IT HELPS HIM VERY MUCH.

>> MIKE?

>> I THINK IT'S EVEN.

IF HE WERE THE GENERAL ELECTION CANDIDATE, IT MAY BE JUST A MINOR MINUS, BUT BECAUSE HE'S NOT THE CANDIDATE YET, I THINK IT'S, YOU KNOW, NO ONE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS GOING TO SAY YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING THIS.

>> JEREMY?

>> I THINK SLIGHTLY MINUS JUST BECAUSE OF HIS TRACK RECORD SO FAR IN FOREIGN POLICY.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, GOVERNOR CRIST FILLED THREE VACANT SEATS ON THE SEVEN-MEMBER WILDLIFE COMMISSION WITH CAMPAIGN FUND-RAISERS TIED TO THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY.

THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" REPORTS THREE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION OPENINGS WENT TO DEEP-POCKET DONORS TO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND CRIST IN PARTICULAR.

CRIST BYPASSED DOZENS OF APPLICANTS MANY WITH ACADEMIC OR CONSERVATION BACKGROUNDS IN FAVOR OF A SITE DEVELOPER, A

DEVELOPER'S ATTORNEY AND A CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVE.

DARRYL, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE APPOINTMENTS?

>> WELL, I THINK THEY ARE GOOD APPOINTMENTS.

I THINK WE SHOULD NOT BE RUSHING TO JUDGMENT BEFORE THEY
HAVE EVEN HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THEMSELVES.

CERTAINLY ONE THINKS THAT WHEN A DONOR MAKES A CONTRIBUTION
TO A CANDIDATE, HE DOES SO BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IN SOME OF
THE PHILOSOPHIES OF THE PERSON THAT HE'S FINANCIALLY
SUPPORTING.

AND HERE WE HAVE A SITUATION WHERE WE GOT A GREEN GOVERNOR.
THERE'S JUST NO QUESTION ABOUT IT.

GOVERNOR CRIST IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND ABOUT
WHAT HAPPENS TO IT.

AND SO HOPEFULLY AND PRAYERFULLY HE'S APPOINTED PEOPLE WHO
SHARE THAT PHILOSOPHY.

>> MIKE, DO YOU AGREE?

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, CHARLIE CRIST HAS A UNIQUE DANCE THAT HE
DOES.

IT'S THE TWO-STEP.

LITTLE ONE STEP TO THE LEFT, ONE STEP TO THE RIGHT.

YOU KNOW, HE PLEASES EVERYONE ELSE.

I THINK THE FUNNIEST THING ABOUT THIS IS WHETHER OR NOT
COMMISSIONER BERGERON IS GOING TO WRESTLE ALLIGATORS FOR
ENTERTAINING TOURISTS.

>> PART OF HIS APPOINTEES.

>> AS YOU KNOW, HE WAS CITED BY THE SAME COMMISSION THAT HE'S CHARGED TO BE HEADING BY WRESTLING AN ALLIGATOR. SO I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT THAT'S GOING TO MEAN. I'D LOVE TO SEE IT, THOUGH.

>> STEVE, THIS DOES SORT OF BELIE, THOUGH, HIS IMAGE AS A GREEN GOVERNOR, BECAUSE A LOT OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAVE CRITICIZED THE GOVERNOR SINCE THE STORIES CAME OUT THAT YOU WROTE.

WHAT'S BEEN THE FALLOUT SO FAR?

>> WELL, THIS RAISES A COUPLE OF INTERESTING POINTS AND DARRYL MAKES A GOOD POINT.

BY THE SAME TOKEN, I WANT TO SAY I THINK IT'S PART OF THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE NEWS MEDIA TO CONNECT DOTS, TO SHOW RELATIONSHIPS, TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT MONEY DOES TALK IN POLITICS.

IT MAY BE SECOND NATURE TO A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, BUT, OF COURSE, HE'S NOT GOING TO APPOINT HIS ENEMIES TO A CONSERVATION COMMISSION, BUT HE COULD HAVE APPOINTED SOME OTHER FRIENDS MAYBE WHO DIDN'T DONATE.

THE OTHER ISSUE HERE IS THIS.

THERE'S A PERCEPTION THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY IS ALL OR NOTHING.

THE TERM THEY USE IS "100 PERCENTERS."

IF YOU'RE NOT WITH A POLITICIAN ALL THE TIME, THE POLITICIAN IS NOT WITH YOU ALL THE TIME, THEN HE'S NO GOOD.

CHARLIE CRIST DAYS BEFORE THESE APPOINTMENTS HAD COME OUT,
HAD PUT ALL THESE ENVIRONMENTAL PEOPLE ON HIS CLIMATE CHANGE
ACTION TEAM TO THE DISTRACTION AND ANGER OF THE BUSINESS
COMMUNITY.

SO ON THE ONE HAND, AS YOU SAY, HE PUT FIVE OR SIX
ENVIRONMENTAL PEOPLE ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE TEAM AND THEN PUT
THESE PEOPLE PERCEIVED AS PRODEVELOPMENT ON THE WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION.

>> WELL, THAT'S THE TWO-STEP THAT MR. SUAREZ WAS TALKING
ABOUT.

[LAUGHTER]

>> HE'S RIGHT.

TO CRITICIZE HIM AT THIS POINT, YOU KNOW, CERTAINLY THESE
APPOINTMENTS DO OPEN UP CERTAIN CRITICISM, BUT HIS
STATEMENTS ON THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUE, HIS
LEADERSHIP ON THAT STUFF, THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO
REMEMBER.

>> THE BIGGER PICTURE IS WHAT HE'S DONE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE.

>> YEAH.

THERE'S TOO MUCH ELSE THAT'S ALREADY OUT THERE FOR, LIKE A
COUPLE OF APPOINTMENTS --

>> WHY CAN'T WE JUST CALL IT BALANCE AS OPPOSED TO TWO-STEP?
SOMETIMES THEY GOT TO STEP TO GET BALANCE.

>> OKAY, DARRYL --

[LAUGHTER]

>> WELL, FINALLY, EACH WEEK, WE ASK OUR PANEL ABOUT ANOTHER STORY FROM THE WEEK OR ON THE HORIZON WHICH AFFECTS PEOPLE HERE IN WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA.

JEREMY, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

>> WELL, THE PROPERTY TAX REFORM MEASURE IN JANUARY IS LOSING SUPPORT FROM, OF ALL PEOPLE, THE SAME SENATORS WHO ACTUALLY VOTED TO PUT THE THING ON THE BALLOT.

TALKED TO SENATOR LISA CARLTON, WHO KEN PRUITT CALLS COPRESIDENT EVEN, AND SHE NOW SAYS SHE'S LEANING TO VOTING NO.

>> WHAT'S HER OBJECTION?

>> SHE'S CONCERNED ABOUT THE EDUCATION COST.

THERE ARE A LOT OF CONCERNS THAT IF YOU DO THIS, THERE WILL BE A ONE BILLION DOLLAR HOLE IN THE EDUCATION BUDGET, AND THEY ARE NOT SURE HOW TO FIX THAT.

MIKE BENNETT, OUR SENATOR FROM BRADENTON, HE'S THE SAME THING.

HE SAID, NO, I'M NOT GOING TO VOTE FOR THIS THING.

YOU CAN'T EVEN GET THE PEOPLE WHO VOTED FOR IT TO PUT IT ON THE BALLOT TO BACK IT.

THAT SENDS A TERRIBLE MESSAGE, EVEN AS CHARLIE CRIST IS TOURING THE STATE TELLING BUILDERS, VOTE FOR THIS, VOTE FOR THIS, AND BACK HOME, PEOPLE ARE LIKE, WELL, I VOTED FOR IT, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T.

>> MIKE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, I WAS GOING TO TAKE PROPERTY TAXES AND INSURANCE.

I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO BE THE NEXT BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

I THINK IT'S THE NEXT BIG STORY FOR THE YEAR.

GOVERNOR CRIST HAS MADE SOME PROMISES IN TERMS OF WHERE PROPERTY TAXES AND PROPERTY INSURANCE RATES ARE GOING TO GO. IT HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

IN FACT, HE HAS SAID, YOU KNOW, A NUMBER IN THE PAST.

THAT NUMBER ISN'T GETTING THERE ANYTIME SOON.

AND I THINK THAT HE'S GOING TO HAVE A WORLD OF TROUBLE COMING HIS WAY ONCE PEOPLE REALIZE THAT.

>> AND DARRYL, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

>> WELL, I THINK IT'S THE FACT THAT THE PROPERTY TAX APPRAISER, JIM SMITH, AND COUNTY ATTORNEY SUSAN CHURUTI ESCAPED THAT INDICTMENT.

CONGRATULATIONS TO COUNTY ATTORNEY SUSAN CHURUTI.

I BELIEVE HER HEART WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

WITH SMITH, WE MAY HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY.

AND WHAT WE SEE HERE IS A PRESENTMENT, NOT AN INDICTMENT.

AND TO ME IT SUGGESTS THAT THE GRAND JURY, WHILE THEY DIDN'T FIND CRIMINAL ACTIVITY, MAY HAVE SOME CONCERN AND MAY BE CRITICAL OF THE BEHAVIOR OF SOME OF THE PUBLIC OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THAT.

>> WILL ANYBODY LOSE THEIR JOB, THOUGH, AS A RESULT OF THIS?

BECAUSE I THINK -- HASN'T CHURUTI BEEN SUSPENDED?

>> YES, SHE'S BEEN SUSPENDED.

I THINK SOMEONE WILL LOSE THEIR JOB, BUT IT MAY BE THROUGH THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

>> OKAY.

STEVE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> IT'S THIS.

I FIND THIS FASCINATING, AND YOU CAN READ ABOUT THIS MAYBE IN THE ST. PETE TIMES THIS WEEKEND.

WE'RE ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF SOMETHING WE'VE NEVER SEEN IN FLORIDA BEFORE.

THAT IS A CAMPAIGN TO GET VOTERS TO REVOKE SIGNATURES THEY'VE ALREADY SIGNED FOR BALLOT INITIATIVES.

THE LEGISLATURE PASSED A LAW, WE'RE ONE OF A HANDFUL OF STATES NOW THAT ALLOW PEOPLE TO TAKE THEIR NAME OFF.

WELL, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS REALLY ALARMED ABOUT SOMETHING CALLED HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY, WHICH BASICALLY REQUIRES VOTER APPROVAL OF HIGHER LAND USE DENSITIES AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

IF IT GETS ON THE BALLOT, PEOPLE SAY THAT THING PASSES, SLAM-DUNK, IT GETS INTO THE CONSTITUTION.

SO HOW DO YOU PREVENT IT FROM GETTING ON THE BALLOT?

YOU RUN A REVOCATION CAMPAIGN AND TRY TO CONVINCE ENOUGH VOTERS TO TAKE THEIR SIGNATURES OFF SO THEY CAN'T GET TO THE THRESHOLD TO GET ON THE BALLOT.

ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA, THE BIG BUSINESS LOBBY GROUP, JUST FORMED A COMMITTEE TO RUN A REVOCATION CAMPAIGN ON THIS.

>> VERY INTERESTING.

THANK YOU, JEREMY WALLACE.

THANK YOU, MIKE SUAREZ.

THANK YOU, DARRYL ROUSON.

AND THANK YOU, STEVE BOSQUET.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE ALWAYS WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS.

SIMPLY E-MAIL US AT FTW@WEDU.ORG OR CALL OUR TOLL FREE LINE AT 800-335-9338.

THIS SHOW WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE EARLY NEXT WEEK.

AND YOU CAN VISIT OUR FRESH, NEW "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" WEB PAGE AT WEDU.ORG.

AND WE INVITE YOU TO TUNE IN TO A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF NONFICTION TELEVISION AVAILABLE ON "WEDU WORLD," OUR NEW DIGITAL CHANNEL.

CHECK YOUR CABLE SERVICE OR WEDU.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION.

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK" RETURNS NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!

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